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A Sanctuary of Trees: Beechnuts, Birdsongs, Baseball Bats, and Benedictions

Gene Logsdon
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Gene Logsdon is a man with a mission: He wants to encourage Americans to maintain small, home woodlots, heat with wood, and return to what he calls a wood culture and a wood economy. *A Sanctuary of Trees*, Logsdon's latest book, discusses in detail the feasibility of depending on wood for fuel, both for individual households and for the country as a whole. He makes a strong case.

But fuel is not the beginning of Logsdon's story, nor is it his only theme. His book is at least as much a sharing of joy as it is an environmental argument. Chapters one through seven, in particular, have strong autobiographical elements, as the author weaves his growing knowledge of and appreciation for trees into descriptions of the earlier stages of his life. From the groves of a rural boyhood to seminary days in a forest (the forest, not the priesthood, was the attraction), to operating a firewood business after leaving the seminary, and then starting married life in a log cabin; from a surprising suburban experience outside Philadelphia and finally back to southern Ohio to stay, every step of Logsdon's life furthered his outdoor education and led eventually to the realization of the life he wanted to lead.

Everything came together when he happened on a book of poetry and insisted that *Farm Journal*, his employer at the time, send him to Kentucky to write a story about a certain farmer poet. "I came back from that first visit knowing for sure that I wanted to live like Wendell Berry and know the woods as he did," says Logsdon.

In *A Sanctuary of Trees* the reader learns about trees in American history and culture, how fast different species grow, how easily their wood splits, how hot it burns, and even which wood leaves fewest ashes. Techniques the author shares for using a chainsaw may save some fingers—certainly they should save some aggravation! The pleasures of gathering nuts and tips for cracking them come into the picture, too.

Memoir, argument, lessons learned, advice offered—beyond these valuable elements, the book is simply a delight to read. Every page is rich with the happiness of a life well-lived, a life the author wishes for us all. Like the woodlots he values so deeply, *A Sanctuary of Trees* is both resource and refuge. It is impossible to read this without feeling enlightened and grateful.□

PAMELA GRATH (Summer 2012)

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